

COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

PRINCIPLES FOR THE CSAVR DURING THE 2002 REAUTHORIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (November 18, 2002)

The attached principles have been developed to guide the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) as recommendations are developed for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Council believes these principles must continue to be the foundation of IDEA to ensure that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Among other things, these principles stress the importance of retaining the key concepts of IDEA. They promote high expectations for students with disabilities and an individualized education program (IEP) process that emphasizes the meaningful involvement of students with disabilities and their families. The principles recognize the important role that Public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) plays in meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are transitioning from the school system to the world of work, while acknowledging the fact that significant increases in VR funding will be necessary to address the rising numbers and employment needs of transitioning youth with disabilities. The principles highlight the importance of providing students with disabilities real work experiences, and address the need to strengthen the coordination and collaboration between state and local education agencies and the Public VR Program.

The Council is composed of the chief administrators of the State VR Agencies serving individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the states, District of Columbia, and the territories. These agencies, which constitute the state partners in the State-Federal program of vocational rehabilitation services authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, have a proven track record in assisting eligible individuals with disabilities in achieving their chosen employment goals. In any given year, State VR Agencies nationwide provide services and supports to and supervise the rehabilitation of approximately 1.2 million individuals with disabilities. Of those served each year, more than 233,000 enter competitive employment.

The Council, which was founded in 1940 to furnish input into the State-Federal Rehabilitation Program, provides a forum for state administrators to study, deliberate, and act upon matters affecting the rehabilitation and employment of individuals with disabilities. The Council serves as a resource for the formulation and expression of the collective points of view of State VR Agencies on all issues affecting the provision of quality employment and rehabilitation services to persons with mental and physical disabilities.

The CSAVR agrees with the conclusion of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education that more effectively implementing existing federal policies and laws will dramatically improve the low rates of individuals with disabilities currently obtaining competitive employment or accessing higher education. The CSAVR believes that the return on America's investment in special education is closely linked to the success of the Public VR Program in meeting the multitude of employment-related needs of transitioning youth with disabilities.

CSAVR's Principles on Reauthorization of IDEA (November 18, 2002)

Principle 1: CSAVR believes that a significant increase in funding for the Public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act is necessary to ensure the availability of qualified rehabilitation counselors who can get involved early in the transition process during the high school years, and meet the rising numbers and employment needs of transitioning youth with disabilities. This increase in VR funding is absolutely necessary to ensure the return on America's investment in special education.

Principle 2: CSAVR supports retaining the key concepts and principles of IDEA, including ensuring the right of students with disabilities to free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, maintaining the procedural guarantees and due process protections; and requiring strong parental participation.

Principle 3: CSAVR supports rigorous education programs that establish and support high expectations for students with disabilities. Increased emphasis on academic achievement of students with disabilities, particularly with regard to strong linkages between the curricula for students with disabilities and academic standards for all students, should result in more students with disabilities leaving public education with basic skills such as reading and math.

Principle 4: CSAVR supports maintaining and enhancing IDEA's emphasis on the involvement of students with disabilities and their parents, guardians, or authorized representatives in participating in the development and monitoring of the Individual Education Program.

Principle 5: CSAVR supports strengthening the central role that vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors play in the transition process for youth with disabilities, including assisting in leveraging community resources, including independent living services, in a coordinated effort to address the significant resources needed to achieve successful transitions. As key participants in the transition process, VR counselors can and should be involved more often and earlier in transition planning for youth with disabilities during the high school years. Career guidance and counseling, work experience, career planning, and other activities in support of an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) are all important roles for the VR counselor in the transition process.

Principle 6: CSAVR supports the inclusion of language in IDEA that strengthens the responsibilities of the IEP team to provide for real work experiences for transitioning youth with disabilities, where appropriate, prior to graduation from high school. CSAVR further acknowledges the importance and supports the inclusion of public Vocational Rehabilitation, other governmental agencies, community based programs and businesses in the IEP process to bring about successful work opportunities for these students.

Principle 7: CSAVR supports strengthening provisions in IDEA that require coordination and collaboration between Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Public VR agencies as they identify the needs of and serve transitioning youth with disabilities. To this end, CSAVR supports the inclusion of concrete individualized goals, and objectives related to transition within the IEP

(under IDEA) and the IPE (under the Rehabilitation Act). The provision of concrete transition goals and objectives will continue to guide the activities of Special Education Personnel and VR Counselors to support students to achieve real life outcomes in the areas defined under transition services within IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act.

Principle 8: **CSAVR supports increasing the focus on parental education and outreach** to ensure that students with disabilities and their parents are aware of what is available to them within the school system, both through IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and of the availability of and eligibility requirements for various adult services programs, including the Public Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Principle 9: For those transitioning special education students who have received assistive technology that has been specifically purchased and provided exclusively for a particular student, **CSAVR supports a national policy whereby such students are permitted to take that assistive technology with them when they leave the educational system.**

Principle 10: **CSAVR supports the full funding of IDEA**, as promised by Congress in the original authorization of PL 94-142, “Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. In many ways, for youth with disabilities to realize the promise of IDEA, transition services must be fully realized as the student gets ready to enter the adult world.

Principle 11: Recognizing the validity of one of the conclusion of the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education that achieving long-term successful post-school outcomes necessitates a close working relationship between VR and special education, **the CSAVR supports expanding data collection and accountability under both IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act to include the collection of information on and an assessment of post-school outcomes.**

(November 18, 2002)